3. Trade

431 Planters command few sources of income; beside their tool equip-
556 ment a thousand new needs have arisen, which trade must satisfy.
437 There is, oddly, no commercial tradition at all among the Pahouin. For bride-price payments previous generations used ivory tusks or pieces of wrought iron in the shape of arrows. But was this a form of money? Nothing was bought, nothing sold. And yet, according to Balandier, the pursuit of wealth represented the men's principal activity (2) aside from routine work, perhaps, moreover, because

> 2. Cf. Largeau (no. 48) for the mythical role of the spider in producing merchandise "among the dead." (P. A.)

there was no trade or exchange. From the accounts, it appears that previous generations could only obtain goods from distant countries by bilaba and not by purchase. The bilaba approximates the potlatch in being a contest. During a visit a host gives his guest all kinds of presents, defying him to do the like. Later the guest will have to offer even more than he received. Thus, exchange and a struggle for prestige are involved at the same time (3). Bilaba apparently were

> 3. J. Guilbot, Journal de la Société des Africanistes, 1951, Vol. 21; G. Balandier, Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire /Contemporary Native African Sociology/, P.U.F. /Presses Universitaires de France/, 1955, p. 182.

means of distributing objects of European origin (salt, weapons, clothes) and of exchanging them for ivory collected in the interior, game, or the dogs that some tribes /34/ eat. In general, it is to such exchanges as these that the old accounts refer. But one can scarcely speak of trade for such ritualized gifts and countergifts. And nothing else warrants the assumption of an economy based on exchange. Between
443 Yaoundé and Brazzaville there are no markets, or, more correctly,
177 the markets that now exist were started by Europeans or at their instigation (1).

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563 Bekôé, are now assimilated and are considered a special Pahouin ayôn
565 (see above, p. 54). But the nomadic groups themselves are beginning to give up the obligatory intermediation of the Pahouin in order to sell their game; they are to be seen at markets and even in government offices and in the courts.

F 609 Foreigners, bone bikul (ékul = foreign tribe), had no rights except as guests or hosts, beyeñ (sing. nneñ), which means that they had in fact to buy security. Since European conquest there has been an increase in the betabe (from tabe = to stay, to dwell), privileged strangers admitted to residence by the head of a family or village, often allied by marriage to the clan amid which they have settled. Their children can be absorbed but are not true bo'beti, at least not
F in the first generations.

56 Thus truly Pahouin society was and remains very much a closed one, since entrance into it is, in practice, only by blood. On the other hand, it is very little stratified internally, outside of age grades; it might even be said to be averse to hierarchies.

F 564 At first one is rather tempted to conclude that there are no castes. This statement is perhaps too sweeping, if we take into consideration the fact that certain endogamous clans like the Ndôñ are perhaps castes or represent former castes. The subject deserves further study. /60/

F 556 565 Does Pahouin society admit of social classes based on birth or wealth? In spite of the egalitarian and anarchic temperament of the Pahouin, I think this is so. Terminology proves it by distinguishing the bo' beti not only from the captives but even from the zesé bôt, the humble people: mo'nti is often translated today as "Monsieur." Within the last two generations there has grown up before our eyes a real bourgeoisie of large-scale planters, clerks (bēkilak), artisans, and skilled workmen, which is inclined to stand out against a lower class of small peasants, laborers, and even, at the moment, of a "proletariat in sunglasses" — petty tradesmen, etc. —a local equivalent of our white-collar workers. Already in traditional society the minkukum, the rich, were to be distinguished from the common people, the zesé bôt.

556 565 431 437 The rich were looked at askance and were objects of suspicion to the general public, always quick to attribute material success to the possession of an évu (évur, évus), to malevolent sorcery. The

nkukum had to excuse his wealth, primarily by distributing it through customary hospitality and also by a special device of economic-social control resembling the potlatch, the bilaba.

This practice seems to have been especially common among the Boulou. Bertaut relates the word to a Ngumba root meaning "to talk," "to cajole." I should rather incline toward a derivative of the verb lap, "to draw water," by extension "to splash," which can figuratively also convey the idea of scoffing. It is not impossible that the bilaba mechanism was connected with that of the joking relationship, awusô. The bilaba begins with a challenge from one nkukum to another, each man claiming to be the richer. The challenger goes to the house of the challenged, carrying a load of merchandise, mebo me dulu, "legs for the journey," and accompanied by a large retinue of musicians and singers, etc. When he reaches the home of the other njem bilaba (bilaba dancer), he overwhelms him with presents and taunts; his opposite number replies, present for present and jeer for jeer, until he has contributed more than the equivalent of the mebo me dulu. The first njem bilaba goes home and waits for the other's return visit with his own mebo me dulu. Visits and countervisits may go on for a long time, each of the bejem bilaba calling on his immediate family for help, then upon his lineage or clan, for continued supplies. The bilaba therefore comes to be a collective affair. It must be observed that not just any kind of merchandise is exchanged: a njem bilaba in the east (nku, ôku) provides local products, (livestock, cacao, ivory, etc.), in the west (nké) imported products (loincloths, salt, powder, etc.) (1). It should be remembered /61/ in this

1. M. Zoll'Owambe (no. 125) speaks of akum so, "merchandise of the north," imports, and of akum nsak, "merchandise of the south," products of the country. But there appears to have been some confusion. In fact, so = coast, downstream, is related to nké = west, which also means downstream, while nsak = hinterland, upstream (nku = east, related to kui = to come from, rise from, emerge); cf. Largeau, who considers the north to be on the right (male) and the south on the left (female). Imported products would be considered male.

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552 connection that the points of the compass have a sexual implication,
565 which is not well understood. The bilaba sets up a sort of joking re-
623 lationship between the families of the participants, which may con-
831 tinue after their death.

The institution seems to be dying out, though it was still flourishing between the two /World?/ wars and often involved considerable amounts of money (1).

> 1. Balandier (no. 175 and in a personal communication) stresses the economic importance of the bilaba which, in a society without a money or trade economy, constituted one of the principal means of circulating goods and, especially, of diffusing imported commodities.

556 In spite of the fear his success inspires, and perhaps because of
602 this fear, the rich man enjoyed undoubted authority in his village and sometimes beyond it. Nkukuma, the absolute form of nkukum, is used to translate "chief" (it probably means, more precisely, "person of note").

554 The word évet, also applied to subchiefs or government "capitas"
622 is likewise used —a correct nuance if, as Bates says, évet is a corruption of headman applied originally to the chiefs of trade caravans. These men were chosen for their business astuteness, diplomacy, authority, and courage, but they were only deputies of a clan or village, not true political chiefs. To convey the latter implication the preferable term is still njôô bôt (Fang, nzoé mur) from jô = to say, to command, a term indicating a de facto state, /état de fait/ rather than a legal notion. It should be recalled that there were no political leaders other than the seniors, mintôl, of the extended families. Their authority was further limited by the ease with which their brothers could leave the village to establish another nearby (2).

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622 2. But among some Pahouinized peoples the existence of royal insignia shows that chiefship /chefferie/ is an institution: among the Ewôndo and Yanda the head of the clan designated his successor or, if he

h. Contracts and Various Quasi Contracts

675 A legal obligation is atiñ, from tiñ = to tie. For a long time no distinction was made between a contract and a quasi /or implied/ contract, but, as the range of independent activity spreads, we may recognize among metiñ the genuine contract, mfañ atiñ, from fañ = to do really, on purpose, by design.

Underlying all metiñ is the idea of compensation, avutan or abutan, which might be interpreted as follows: any effect /atteint/, positive or negative, on the total legal personality of an individual through the act of another must lead to a positive or negative compensation restoring the status quo ante. In other words, whoever enriches another person, has a claim to compensation; whoever deprives another, owes compensation.

Thus arises the distinction between nsenge and avu or avuan which have sometimes been confused by being translated as "gain" or "profit." It /79/ seems that nsenge in fact referred specifically to commercial profit made outside the clan through trade, abom, to which compensation did not apply. Avu or avuan (from vu = to grow rich, to increase in wealth, with an = to grow, to increase) meant the natural increase in property, such as a harvest in relationship to the sowing /or/ the biological increase of a herd. If the avuan was made at the expense of a monyañ, compensation was called for. Nowadays the idea of avuan approximates that of interest, legitimate or illegitimate according to the case. The weakening of the old social structures at the same time tends to allow nsenge even within the clan.

437 675 The verb kuan, to sell, is merely the reciprocal form of the verb kus, to buy; thus kuan means literally, "one person's buying from another," with a now very attenuated implication of exchange. The verbs fol and folan, formerly almost synonymous with kus and kuan, have kept the sense of "exchange"; they are applied to barter, kuan and kus, to money transactions.

At the present time selling is considered to be established with delivery of the merchandise or the payment, while exchange seems to call for a simultaneous delivery of the objects exchanged.

421 675 To lend something for temporary and brief use is señ; it is not strictly speaking a contract, and the borrower may even not be under obligation, for example when he has been loaned a tool to carry out